

**COMMITTEE ON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**  
**(Standing Committee of Berkeley County Council)**

Chairman: Mrs. Judith K. Spooner, District No. 2

Members: Mr. Milton Farley, District No. 1  
Mr. William E. Crosby, District No. 3  
Mr. Charles E. Davis, District No. 4  
Mr. Steve M. Vaughn, District No. 5  
Mrs. Judy C. Mims, District No. 6  
Mr. Caldwell Pinckney, Jr. District No. 7  
Mr. Henry L. Richardson, Jr., District No. 8  
Mr. James H. Rozier, Jr., Supervisor, ex officio

A special meeting of the COMMITTEE ON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT met on Monday, May 21, 2001, Berkeley County Office Building, 223 North Live Oak Drive, Moncks Corner, South Carolina, at 6: 50 p. m.

PRESENT: Mrs. Judith K. Spooner, Councilmember District No. 2, Chairman; Mr. Milton Farley, Councilmember District No. 1; Mr. William E. Crosby, Councilmember District No. 3; Mr. Charles E. Davis, Councilmember District No. 4; Mr. Steve M. Vaughn, Councilmember District No. 5; Mrs. Judy C. Mims, Councilmember District No. 6; Mr. Caldwell Pinckney, Jr., Councilmember District No. 7; Mr. Henry L. Richardson, Jr., Councilmember District No. 8; Mr. James H. Rozier, Jr., Supervisor, Jr., ex officio; and Rich Lingenfelter, Deputy County Attorney.

The requirements of the Freedom of Information Act have been complied with by posting the time, date, place and copy of Agenda of this Committee meeting of Berkeley County Council at the entrance to the Berkeley County Office Building, 223 N. Live Oak Drive, Moncks Corner, South Carolina, and a copy of such notice was mailed to all Councilmembers and the News media.

Chairman Spooner called the meeting to order. She asked Mr. Rozier to give Council an update on Cypress Gardens, (here in after referred to as CG).

Mr. Rozier began by introducing Dr. Dwight Williams, Director at CG, and asked Dr. Williams to come and introduced the staff of CG that were in attendance.

Dr. Williams introduced; Kelly Lancaster, Aquarist; Shannon Schalles, Animal Care Technician; Tracy Sigrist, Education Coordinator; Melanie Borts, Animal Care Technician; Linda Green, Horticulturist; Julie Yaegar, Gift Shop Cashier; Joann Schaff, Gift Shop Manager; Scott Bazzel, Maintenance Supervisor; Terry Rodgers, Maintenance worker; and Roseann Bishop, Administrative Assistant. Mr. Rozier stated there were other staff members that were not present and that CG has 22 full time employees.

Mr. Rozier began his presentation by reflecting back to when Berkeley County acquired CG in October 1996. Mr. Rozier referred to the following information on CG. The year before Berkeley County owned it there were 17,217 total visitors and 2,816 total students. In the first year that Berkeley County acquired CG, which was a nine month period, visitors increased to 22,956, a 33% increase from the twelve months before. The student visitors that year were 5,523, an increase of 153%. The first full twelve months Berkeley County had CG, which was 1998, there were 37,109 visitors, an 116% increase from the year before it was acquired. That same year there were 6,194 students, an increase of 183% from 1996. The total visitors include the students, but Mr. Rozier explained the reason he had broken the students out was because the main purpose of CG is education, particularly to the Tri-County area. In 1999 there were 45,414 total visitors with 8,637 being students, an increase of 164% total visitors and 295% increase student visitors from 1996. The latest year that Berkeley County has audited numbers is for the year 2000. In that year there were 54,746 visitors, an increase of 218%, with 11,519 being student visitors, an increase of 427% from the time that it was acquired in 1996. Mr. Rozier continued by saying the Reptile Center recently opened, with a 17-foot anaconda weighing 300 pounds; a 13-foot one-inch alligator; numerous crocodiles; and a 200-pound python. This center has attracted even more visitors to the Gardens.

Mr. Rozier directed the Council's attention to an exhibit on the Cash Flow at CG. In 1997, the first year Berkeley County owned CG, there was a \$230,000 positive cash flow, and further explained the numbers were accumulative. The next year, 1998, there was a positive cash flow of \$34,949. In 1999, there was again another positive cash flow of \$337,144. Through the year 2000, the last year there are audited figures, there was a net positive cash flow of \$137,453. This includes contributions from industry and cash generated from admission, rental of facilities and the movie that was filmed there, and interest from invested money. It includes everything except some Bond funds. Mr. Rozier illustrated that CG Financial Condition through 2000 is an accumulative total assets (not including land) of \$2,489,441, and estimated land assets \$2,700,000. Hence, giving total assets of \$5,189,441, which includes \$794,320 from bond fund used to purchase long-term assets. Mr. Rozier concluded his presentation by stating CG is doing very well.

Mr. Crosby asked if there were any projected figures for this year, 2001?

Mr. Rozier indicated the Gardens just received a \$37,000 contribution from Bayer; \$50,000 from Alcoa; \$25,000 from Santee Cooper, and there are outstanding pledges totaling \$525,000. This is not including substantial assets.

Tracy Sigrist, Education Coordinator, explained that there are two programs available to students. There is the boat ride through the swamp, the most popular because of the hands on aspect. The dip net tour that allows students to take long nets and collect specimens, such as tadpoles and examine them under a video microscope that can be blown up on a television screen. The aquarium has added a fish program that discusses the morphology of fish and a tour of aquarium. There is the butterfly house, and a fossil program, where one can learn about fossils and dig for them, and a hands on reptile program. The cost per student is \$2-\$3, depending on the extent of the tour.

Mr. Pinckney asked if there is a profit in the net cash flow and assets, which were shown earlier? He explained it is his belief, if you are running a business you are looking to make a profit.

Mr. Rozier explained that there is a return on investment of \$4,500,000. He also pointed out that other towns don't make a profit on their parks program.

Mr. Vaughn interjected that with contributions, CG was making a profit.

Mr. Rozier continued by stating the "Friends of Cypress Gardens" sponsorship will be started again. This allows businesses and individuals to sponsor exhibits in the park on an annual basis.

Mr. Davis questioned the amount paid each year toward the bond.

Mr. Rozier indicated the bond was issued at approximately 5.3 percent and was a 30-year bond. Berkeley County did not borrow the entire amount of the bond; there were things of higher interest that were refinanced. Therefore, the actual amount borrowed was much less.

Mr. Rozier stated Councilmember Mims asked to have the Fee-in-lieu tax explained. Mr. Rozier expressed this was one of the most misunderstood things Berkeley County does, and went on to explain as follows: "This is a Fee that industry pays in lieu of paying taxes; they still write a check annually. All homes are assessed at 4%, all rental units are assessed at 6%, and all commercial business are assessed at 6%. In South Carolina, industry, the one that brings the most tax dollars and brings the most jobs, are taxed at 10.5%. Other states do not do this, and have a much lower tax rate than South Carolina. Therefore, in South Carolina, we have Fee-in-lieu of taxes that allows us to lower industries tax assessment to 6%. Mr. Rozier provided a list of businesses in Berkeley County that pay a Fee-in-lieu tax totaling \$10,003,703 annually. In comparison, 10,216 direct jobs have been created. Including sub-contract jobs generated there have been over 26,000 total jobs created. This has decreased our unemployment from 7% to 1.9%; we are currently at 2.7%. The average house in Berkeley County is approximately \$75,000. Net annual property taxes and fees in Berkeley County are \$355.00/per year net after all discounts. It would take 28,179 new houses in Berkeley County to pay as much taxes as the industries pay in this county. The increase in housing would require the county to provide and staff the following: 20 new schools, 8 new EMS stations, 30 new deputies, etc."

Mr. Mims asked what amount of the Fee-in-lieu goes to Berkeley County?

Mr. Rozier explained 31% goes to Berkeley County, 5% funds economic development, and 1% goes to Williamsburg County, our multi-county park partner, and the balance goes toward the schools.

Mr. Spooner asked what percentage of this business would we get if they were required to pay 10.5% taxes?

Mr. Rozier stated approximately 20%; 80% would have gone elsewhere. Mr. Rozier explained we have good laborers and inexpensive land, but profit drives industry. He concluded by saying we would not have acquired Nucor if we had not been able to offer a fee-in-lieu of taxes to them.

Chairman Spooner commented she loves CG, and many other persons feel as she does in regard to the Gardens. She continued by saying if CG cost the County money she feels that it would be a good investment.

Councilmember Mims stated she supported CG too, but the issue is the money. She indicated she had a report from the Treasurer that shows CG being in the red by \$668,561.53. There were three items that would account for money in the bank. If you subtract the two, it leaves \$433,847.82. She asked if anyone could explain this?

Mr. Rozier stated he would be happy to look at the report, but he would not have the audited numbers from 2001 as of yet. The only audited numbers he has goes through the year 2000.

Councilmember Vaughn moved to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Councilmember Crosby; passed by voice vote of the Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

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There will be a Special Meeting of the COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, Standing Committee of Berkeley County Council, on Monday May 21, 2001, in the Council Chambers, Berkeley County Office Building, 223 N. Live Oak Drive, Moncks Corner, South Carolina, to begin at 6:50 p.m.

**AGENDA**

- A. James H. Rozier, Berkeley County Supervisor, Re: Update on Cypress Gardens.

May 16, 2001  
S/Barbara B. Austin  
Clerk of County Council